

ALLONE HEALTH FAMILY OF EAPS

TRANSITIONING BACK TO WORK: EMOTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

KEEP IN MIND

- Parts of our brain have shut down in order to survive as a result we are not able to fully process all of what is going on
- Feeling somewhat numb and out of touch with our emotions is normal, especially if you have past experiences of trauma
- We deal with it differently some more apt for hypervigilance/ anxiety while others may be depressed/ hypoactive
- In-depth processing of trauma may happen years later
- When in the midst of trauma just getting by emotionally and functioning at a different pace can be normal

Source: Jennifer Yanger, LPC – Trauma Specialist

ANTICIPATORY AND COLLECTIVE REACTIONS TO EXPECT

- Know that it is normal to have mixed feelings about returning to work – may be anxious, fearful or excited about it (at home experiences vary from home to home – “in the same storm but not the same boat”)
- Individually and collectively we are grieving many losses in both our personal and professional lives
- Children, even older children, may become more clingy, as well as our pets and may not want us to RTW! (need to prepare them)
- Having to tolerate the uncertainty
- May have concern for safety precautions at work

Emotional Pyramid of Needs: Gentle Acceptance, Compassion, Routine, Connect, Courage, Wisdom & Reset

WHEN RETURNING, REMEMBER:

- May feel like the first day of school again.
- Expect it to bother you!
- May not like the new changes or precautions at work (such as practicing distancing, work areas may be rearranged, wearing masks or wipe downs).
- If have felt isolated at home may look forward to returning but may feel isolated there, as well, due to the physical distancing.
- May grieve the former routines, set up and “old ways of doing things.”

PRACTICE:

- **Managing Expectations**
Expect this to bother you and remind yourself “I am doing the best I can,” consider what you can and can’t control at this time and let go of perfectionism
- **Positive Self-Talk**
“I can do this, small steps, this will get better, this too shall pass”
- **Identify and Regulate Emotions**
May notice increase in resistance, “fire hosing,” or irritability in self or others
- **Communicate With One Another**
“If don’t talk it out will act it out”
- **Apologize**
When appropriate, respectfully and genuinely apologize
- **Embrace Feedback**
Own your own behavior and listen to feedback from others (resist the temptation to get defensive)
- **Support Each Other**
Despite safe distancing can still support one another, be patient, empathic and kind with each other (some may struggle more than others)

TO OFFSET THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT - STRESS RESPONSE

1. **Drink water!** (forget with masks)
2. **Exercise regularly** – 3 x times a week, 30 min if possible
3. **Eat healthy food** that boots your immune system (fruits and bright veggies)
4. **Sleep** – average of 7 hours a night (make bedroom conducive for sleep; if wake up write down, or type, concerns or get up for a while; limit what you watch or listen to prior to sleep)

HOW TO SUPPORT OTHERS:

DON'T SAY:

- “Stop worrying about it.”
- “Don’t let it bother you so much.”
- “Calm down or snap out of it.”
- “We’ve all been there”
- “I know exactly how you feel.”
- “Maybe you should think of happier things.”

DO SAY

- “Thank you for letting me know how you are doing.”
- “How may I help you, is there anything that you need or is there something I can do for you?”
- “I can’t imagine what you are going through.”
- Do follow up with the person later and remember we cannot talk anyone in or out of something!

REACCLIMATING TO THE WORKPLACE

- Create new routines at work
- Boundaries have been blurred while working from home – reset boundaries in order to not burn out!
- If see something of concern, say something
- Be kind and remind if someone forgets or doesn’t follow new safety protocols or policies (thank them if you are the one needing reminder)
- Take breaks and get fresh air when possible
- Celebrate new milestones
- Practice gratitude individually or as a team
- Practice mindfulness – being in the moment
- Remember you will experience up’s and down’s

REMEMBER: ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT – “IT IS OK TO NOT BE OK”

- Utilize your EAP and resources offered through the EAP

SOURCES AND RESOURCES:

- Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change and Thrive in Work and Life by Susan David, PhD
- National Institutes of Mental Health website([nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov))
- [Neveralone.love](https://www.neveralone.com) (for support and additional resources) Deepak Chopra
- Podcasts – search topics of stress, anxiety or depression
- Search your APP Store for “anxietyrelief” – many apps for anxiety, depression and sleep disorders
- Apps like “Headspace” and “Calm” <https://blog.calm.com/take-a-deep-breath>
- Varsity Tutors – online free summer camps – K-12

